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THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE.

EMILE BOUTROUX.

WERE we to listen to the suggestions of our physical body, wearied by the almost superhuman efforts of over four years, as we dwelt on the victory which crowned those efforts we might think we had only to rest on our oars, feeling that our future was assured and that the questions still at issue would solve themselves. This is by no means the case, for though the War has settled one terrible problem, it has created others. It would seem to have made more powerful, and even more threatening, certain formidable developments which have long been showing themselves in society.

Undoubtedly it is well to dwell on the enormous benefits which peace brings with it. And it is just as well to think of the difficulties still with us, difficulties which, it may be, will endanger the very existence of human civilisation unless we face them boldly. They are many and varied; consequently, we shall endeavour to point out two or three of the more important ones and see how we may meet them.

The War establishes the triumph of the principle of nationality. Henceforward it is an acknowledged thing that states must coincide with nations, and that each nation, worthy of the name, must be mistress of her own destinies. But this principle of political morality is not an infallible pledge of peace and harmony in the world. The fact that it has been proclaimed as the charter of future humanity does not mean that the nations have changed their nature and temperament.

The principle of nationality is the application to the nations of the first principle formulated by the Declaration of '91: "All men are born free and equal in rights." Nations endowed with a national consciousness are really moral individuals and so possess the prerogatives inherent in individuals. This is what the Powers declared when they

affirmed the principle of nationality. As a matter of actual fact, however, nations are very unequal both in extent and in power. Strictly speaking, the principle of nationality is the affirmation of the independence of right over against might, and of spirit over against matter. Now, we must take into account the part played by matter in the affairs of this world. Nations are interrelated in both the physical and the moral order of things. Our problem, therefore, is to keep inviolable the equality of right, dignity and independence in all nations in spite of their irreparable material inequality. A theoretically simple though practically arduous problem, one that requires from what are called the great Powers not only a noble moderation, but also a fine sense of human equity and fraternity, and from the smaller nations a constant and genuine concern for their dignity and liberty. The great Powers must know how to rule themselves; the lesser ones must pay but little heed to the advantages that might accrue to them from being reduced to a state of servitude.

A second principle effected by the War is the emancipation of individuals. Now, man everywhere has become himself once more, a self-possessing entity, whom no one has the right to reduce to the condition of an instrument.

This emancipatory development is at the present time leading up to a crisis which had begun to emerge even previous to the War: the crisis of authority. Formerly, liberty and authority were set over against each other as two contraries; the establishment of their mutual relations was sought for in the three following directions: either a stand was made for authority and the restriction of liberty, or a stand was made for liberty and the restriction of authority, or else an attempt was made to find a compromise between these two principles.

There is now showing itself more and more in society a doctrine that is distinct from all three: liberty is set up as sole principle. There is no intention, however, of excluding authority. Authority, however, regarded as having a separate existence and as possessing any autonomy what-

soever, is indeed wholly rejected. But the existence and the necessity of authority, intended and instituted as an immediate and ever renewed emanation of liberty itself, are upheld. The governing masses appoint leaders whom they constantly keep in hand; upon these leaders they confer absolute authority. Instead of condemning, they extol discipline, and undertake to submit blindly to it. But they acknowledge the right to be ruled only by those whom they have themselves directly invested with this function. Instead, therefore, of denying the legitimacy of authority and the necessity of obedience, these apostles of absolute liberty whole-heartedly advocate both, though they regard authority as an immediate and continuous product of liberty.

A remarkable doctrine, capable of being enthusiastically upheld by a professor prepossessed in favour of logic, of paradox and the absolute; but still a doctrine which, the more inexorably it is applied, undermines and overthrows the loftiest creations of mankind and finally destroys itself. This conception results in the out-and-out condemnation of what is called the State. For whereas the State, as it exists conformably to ancient tradition and in accordance with the principles of the French Revolution, is based on the sovereignty of the nation, none the less has it an existence of its own, in so far as it incarnates the permanent and world-wide interests of the nation. The State is founded on the will of the citizens; it represents, however, their essential and fundamental will, which is to live in a state of peace and at the same time to retain and increase the national acquisitions bequeathed by their predecessors. Consequently the State should be in a position to act without its existence being constantly called in question as regards each of its acts. It is in this sense that it appoints its own agents, who thus only indirectly hold their authority from the people.

Such being the nature of the State, its maintenance is clearly incompatible with the realisation of government as emanating from the governed, in a strictly and constantly

immediate way. Nor can those who uphold this system admit that the idea of patriotism is to continue. The mother-land is the surviving soul of our beloved dead; it is the witness and the maker of our history; it is our past, our common glory, the ideal after which we aspire and which we mean to bequeath to those who follow us. The mother-land, therefore, is more than a simply existing and ever-decaying creation, the offspring of wills which think of nothing but their individual independence. The mother-land is the mystic self of a nation in its past, present and future existence; it is the life principle whereby it rises above time and creates endless destinies for itself. The mother-land cannot find favour among the partisans of direct government; indeed, these men generally call themselves internationalists, perverting the true meaning of the word, which etymologically implies the preservation of those nations which have set up relations with one another, whereas it is improperly taken to involve the abolition of national frontiers.

Nor is this all. The doctrine under consideration tends increasingly to assimilate, almost to identify authority with liberty, the rulers with the ruled, capital with work, employers with employes. Now, the more this doctrine is understood, the more the masses feel driven to rise in insurrection against all authority which retains any degree whatsoever of autonomy or of existence of its own. Thus, private groups refuse obedience to their own superior and central committees; and, within the private groups themselves, the tendency is for each one to obey only the man chosen as a result of the most elementary grouping.

The logical consequence, therefore, of the doctrine of authority as the immediate emanation of liberty, or the doctrine of strictly direct government, is increasing disintegration and progressive inefficiency, ending in absolute anarchy, each individual coming finally to have no other ruler than himself.

As the War has magnified the principle of nationality as well as that of individual liberty, so it has also con-

siderably emphasised a third principle, the might and dignity of work. Undoubtedly, we cannot be too well pleased with such a result, on condition we give this third principle its true and salutary meaning. Now, in certain centres of activity which claim to represent the totality of the workers, we find in process of development a conception of the law of work that is calculated to cause uneasiness.

In the first place, it is alleged that only those occupations which tend immediately to the production of material results should be regarded as deserving the name of work. In the second place, it is claimed that, in a normal state of society, every citizen must be compelled to undertake work as thus defined.

The consequence of these doctrines is that all the members of a given community must be specialised in the various branches of practical activity. No one of them has the right to remain a complete organism, self-sufficing, as it were; but all must be reduced to the state of organs, each one appropriated to some determinate function. No one remains a whole, a person: all are transformed into parts, into instruments that exist solely in view of the collective whole. Henceforth division of work is the only law of society, whose ideal it is to imitate the perfection of a beehive or of an ant-hill. Such is the claim.

Doubtless material production is capable of being greatly furthered by this conception of human life. All the same, we may be permitted to enquire whether, in the blind pursuit after the maximum of industrial production, mankind does not risk sacrificing some of the most precious advantages and blessings it had won throughout the ages.

The strict specialisation of all individuals without exception is nothing more than the very annihilation of that being, superior to the limitations of matter and instinct, whom, under the name of man, the sages of all times have striven to create and develop.

Man, *qua* man, the philosophers tell us, is a being whose essence is reason, not instinct; and reason is the power to think and act properly and suitably, in numberless and

varied circumstances, in accordance with those ideas of truth and justice, beauty and goodness, which prevail over all particular rules. The whole of human education—more especially what is called classical education—has tended to set man free from that specialisation in aptitudes, which is the province of the lower animals. It is this education which is declared to be wrong and whose fruits are rejected by the doctrine that manual work is alone worthy of the name of work, and obligatory upon all, without any distinction whatsoever.

We ought to reflect seriously on the dangers here mentioned, as well as on others of equal importance, so that we may oppose them by the best defensive methods at our disposal.

The principle of nationality is henceforth inevitable; the problems it sets us cannot be eluded. The particular problem we are here considering is the following: how can we maintain, on a footing of equality, the rights of nations which are inevitably most unequal both in extent and in power? How are we to keep up that autonomous development of various nationalities which constitutes the beauty and the greatness of the human race, in spite of the enormous differences in resource and influence which assuredly will continue indefinitely among the peoples?

No doubt prudent legal settlements and skilful economic combinations are eminently calculated to facilitate and bring about the free development of the various nations. The League of Nations, instituted for the very purpose of securing the strict concord of order and liberty throughout the world, will be most useful in furthering the true realisation of the principle of nationality. All the same, the practical difficulties appear to be so great that we sometimes ask ourselves if the effective application of this great principle is not somewhat utopian.

As regards the social bond, the ancients put forth a doctrine, apparently quite simple, though one which, even at the present time, maybe, merits consideration. We read in Cicero: *Ratio vinculum societatis*, "the bond of society

is reason." That is to say, human societies are not a result of blind instinct alone, or of the pressure of external conditions, or of institutions: they are based on the faculty which is peculiar to man, and which exists, identical in essence, in every human being—the faculty of conceiving and of carrying out ends superior to the results capable of being created by material forces, viz., such incorporeal objects as truth and justice, harmony and happiness and beauty. It is from within man, from his spirit, that comes the force which produces truly human societies. A nation is a spiritual being.

Again, when men pursue higher ends in common, they are united by bonds of friendship, a friendship all the more generous, pure and true as the tasks in which they collaborate are themselves lofty and beneficent. Thus reason is the principle of love, as well as of social union. Now, love possesses a wonderful property, one, too, which the ancients greatly emphasised: it produces equality between those it unites: *amicitia pares aut invenit aut facit*, "friendship either finds or makes equals."

The solution of the problem before us: moral equality in material inequality, thus lies in the development, within the League of Nations, of the spiritual principles of human society: reason, the common mark and common nobility of all men, aspiration towards ideal things, harmony of soul, and friendship. The League of Nations should include the perfect blending of minds and hearts.

The problem of the relation between authority and liberty may also manifestly have light thrown upon it, if we go back to certain classic teaching of the great thinkers.

It is important to maintain the inevitable distinction between authority and liberty, *i.e.*, between the community and the individual. The community is not a mass of individuals. A city, said Aristotle, is not an aggregate of citizens. Society aims at ends and uses means which are beyond the capacity of individuals. It tends to produce a form of humanity which neither conceives of nor desires the individual as such. Not that society coerces the in-

dividual. Deep within the soul of the latter are tendencies towards supra-individual ends. Left to himself, however, the individual would let these tendencies slumber, he would pay no heed to them. If he is to apply himself to the conception and the fulfilling of his higher destinies, society must send forth the summons.

Accordingly we must maintain the fundamental irreducibility of authority, as an attribute of the community, and liberty, as a right of the individual. But what relation is to exist between the two?

In Plato there is a doctrine dealing with the relations of the one and the multitude, which would seem to throw light on the present question. He first proves the irreducibility both of the one to the many and of the many to the one, as well as the necessity of maintaining both principles alike. Then, seeking under what conditions these two principles may be attained and developed, he finds that the one remains abstract so long as it does not consent to share in the many and that the multitude is but an incoherent, inert and impotent mass unless provided with that co-ordination which participation in the one can alone give to it. Thus, though radically distinct, the one and the many can exist and show forth their virtues only by a process of interpenetration.

This doctrine, as applied to our problem, means that, while the duality of rulers and ruled, State and citizens, employers and employes, is a necessary and well-founded one, these two powers must all the same not remain external to each other. Neither must authority rule despotically, nor must liberty claim its rights arbitrarily and violently. Rather must liberty and authority, ruled and rulers, in a spirit of close and cordial sincerity understand and permeate each other, collaborate and unite in the attainment of the loftiest form of humanity possible for the nation. As a matter of fact, in a well-organised society, neither does the one really command nor does the other obey. High above them, rulers and ruled see the common ideal: the honour and greatness of the mother-land.

Both are alike the servants of one and the same master: duty.

Universal and exclusive specialisation as the sole law of society in the immediate future is evidently the third danger to be confronted. How is this to be done?

It concerns in the highest degree both the dignity and the future of mankind that there should be maintained and developed that human type, aiming after ideal ends, enamoured of reason, intelligence and beauty, which the work of centuries has produced and fashioned. The creation of this being, capable of surmounting the limits of his organism and of his special capacities in order to form one with the universal, is the masterpiece of the universe. Were humanity to renounce this form of existence, it would mean self-abjuration, self-mutilation and suicide. It would also mean the draining of the very spring of that material progress after which alone we claim to be striving. For, though the skilled workman, who is that and nothing more, may effect improvements in detail, he is incapable of those great theoretical conceptions which alone radically transform practical life and open up new perspectives to human activity. It is from the free and untrammelled reflections of an intellect devoted to pure science that new and fruitful ideas spring. Who discovered the marvellous law of universal attraction? Newton. And what method did he employ? Incessant meditation.

If humanity is not to decline, it is its duty to maintain the existence of man, akin to the universal, by the side of and above those specialised artisans necessitated in practical life by the law of the division of work. Now, to bring about this needed end, there is one means, perhaps one only: education. Education is capable of moulding the interior man, of developing his powers, disciplining his tendencies and directing his aspirations. It is the business of education to vindicate and increasingly to dignify this characteristically human being whom the centuries have fashioned. Not every kind of education, however, will be able to do this. The education needed is that which shapes

the mind in those things that transcend the limitations of matter. It must develop judgment, the moral consciousness, the sense of the ideal, rather than bring out special and immediately utilisable capacities. In other words, what is needed is classical education, as it is called. In reality, classical education and education are synonymous terms. If education is not classical it is nothing more than a purely mechanical drilling, the training applied to a horse. Consequently, the finest instruments of education are now, as ever, the works of those wonderful writers of antiquity who expressed the truest and sanest ideas on man and his vocation in the most complete and memorable form. In default of these models, we may, of course, find lofty principles of education in the great writers of all countries. All the same, we must maintain the cult of those Greek and Latin writers who are, so to speak, the living and eternal fount of a true and noble human civilization.

Education, *i.e.*, classical education as just defined, should not be the privilege of the few. In various and appropriate forms, it should be liberally apportioned to all without exception during the early years of childhood, when mental impressions are ineffaceable. However necessary specialisation may be, every man has the right to be a man in the full sense of the word. A solid classical education will most completely fit him for maintaining his essentially human dignity.

The educational period is pre-eminently childhood and youth. All the same, he who is truly a man will retain throughout life a certain flexibility, a capacity for progress, which distinguishes him from the animal; he advances at every age. The education of the adult is effected by society, which, like the child's tutor, has power to act upon the interior capabilities of the man and to modify his inmost nature. It is thus advisable that every man, quite apart from his professional and his family life, should live a social life. And it is the same with this social life as with the education supplied by the tutor. In order to be as effica-

cious as we expect it to be, it must not be the mere juxtaposition of individuals given up to their respective professional tasks. Above all, it must be characterised by a spirit of broad and large-hearted humanity, of politeness, good sense and elevation of soul, of precision and idealism, in a word, one that conforms to the classical ideal.

Now, it is the presence of women and the predominant part played by them that has the best chance of effecting all this in social life. It is woman who has civilised man, ennobled his brute nature, and developed in him a sense of moral delicacy, discretion and pity, the spirit of justice and equity, of conciliation and tolerance. Let women remain women, *i.e.*, let them retain the higher qualities for which they are specially qualified, and the part played by them in the world will be a more useful one than ever. The practice of the essentially feminine virtues will mean the preservation of a moral and spiritual civilisation which is now menaced by the constant progress of industrialism and utilitarianism.

We have touched upon a few of the questions that occupy the mind at the present time. To answer them, they seem to call for the jealous maintenance and the fervent propagation of so-called classical ideas, *i.e.*, of the general and political, moral and religious ideas of which present-day civilisation is the fruit. No material organisation, no external coercion will suffice. It is from within that man lives, from within that he dies. Human civilisation is spiritual in its nature, and only so long as the spirit is active can it be kept alive.

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